

Hello, My name is Mary Drier

My son Sgt. Charles Drier was killed May 24, 2005 in Iraq.

At that time, he was the 51st Michigan soldier who had died during this last conflict and peace keeping mission. Since then there are over 141 other families who have had a love one die over there.

A year ago, Senator Jim Barcia attempted to have a bill passed to extend bereavement time for family members who had someone killed during active service.

That proposal was referred to as Charlie's bill. It died in committee because special interest groups - like the Chamber of Commerce and such, blocking it.

Since then, Rep. Terry Brown has taken up the cause introducing HB 4745, and Barcia recently introduced SB 804 which is similar to his previous attempt, and to Brown's proposal.

The premise of the bills ask for 10 days or 80 hours of paid leave for direct family members who have someone killed during active duty for their county.

During his second tour of duty in Iraq, my son was killed by an improvised explosive device.

I was notified of his death the following day, but his body wasn't released for the funeral until 9 days later; and then it was another five days after that before the funeral was over.

Those were the longest days of my life. Most funerals are done and over in 3 to 4 days, but not when it comes to the military and their procedures.

In these uncertain times, parents are uneasy when their child joins the service.

Then when their child is sent overseas into combat zones as a military representative for the U. S., for months at a time there is no peace of mind until their child is safely home.

For those like me, their child doesn't return home. Only their body does.

Unless you have lost a child you have no idea of the pain. The pain continues to build for days and days waiting for the body to be released and then the funeral to be over.

Families need more time than a few days to grieve that loss - especially when it is dragged out over two weeks or more.

Truth, justice and the American way are more than just words to me, and they were more to my son than just word he read as a child in his super hero comic books.

They are ^{values} ~~principals~~ we live by, and ones he died for.

Those in the service fight for their county and Democracy. They fight for the government that you represent.

I cannot see why either Rep. Brown's or Senator Barcia's proposal would not be whole heartily supported by fellow lawmakers and true Americans.

I find it unfathomable how any lawmaker in good conscious would vote against either of these proposals.

Caving into pressure of special interest groups who balk at the idea of paying an additional seven days of leave is a slap in the face of not only each family member

who has had a loss, but also to those who died serving their country.

Thank you